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Patrick Administration Announces over \$989,000 in Agricultural Grants

Awards will Fund Projects to Explore Farm-based Renewable Energy, Conserve Water, Boost Aquaculture, and Assist Slaughterhouse Destroyed by Fire

BOSTON – Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles today announced \$989,174 in grants to help the Massachusetts agricultural sector diversify and compete in the marketplace.

The ten awards announced today include the Commonwealth's second round of Agricultural Innovation Center grants, as well as a \$250,000 Farm Viability Program grant for the Adams Farm Slaughterhouse, which burned to the ground in December 2006.

A "virtual" agency with no staff or office, the Agricultural Innovation Center builds partnerships between the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) and industry support and trade organizations to develop agricultural enterprises that are economically viable and environmentally sustainable. DAR received 17 proposals worth just over \$2 million for FY 2008 Agricultural Innovation Center grants and, following review by a multi-agency team, selected nine for funding. The state grants require substantial matching funds from industry and other sources.

"The wide diversity of programs funded in this round of grants is a testament to the vibrancy of the Massachusetts agricultural community, and to the industry's willingness to branch out in new directions to remain vital and competitive," Secretary Bowles said. "I am pleased to offer the Commonwealth's assistance in promoting innovation."

The largest Agricultural Innovation grant – \$149,263 – goes to the University of Massachusetts for a project that will introduce corn-burning technology for greenhouse heat at 10 vegetable and flower operations, while helping to increase production and marketing of corn-for-fuel on four farms. DAR also approved a \$25,000 grant for The Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestland's "Defining Green Energy for Massachusetts" project.

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“Funding renewable energy projects through the Agricultural Innovation Center is in keeping with Governor Patrick’s strong commitment to clean energy, and helps put Massachusetts farmers and growers on the cutting edge of these exciting new technologies,” DAR Commissioner Doug Petersen said.

Projects funded in part by Agricultural Innovation Center grants are:

- **University of Massachusetts—Amherst (\$149,263).** Through its “Building Model Networks Among Dairy, Vegetable and Floriculture Farms to Grow and Use Shelled Corn for Greenhouse Heat” project, UMass will provide the infrastructure to create networks between users and producers of corn-burning technologies, and educate farmers about corn-for-fuel and other sources of renewable energy.
- **Cape Cod Cranberry Growers’ Association—East Wareham (\$81,543).** This project’s goal is to understand the actual water needs for growing Massachusetts cranberries, to develop more cost effective and environmentally-responsible water management that reduces water use and pesticide leaching into groundwater, ponds and rivers.
- **Community Teamwork, Inc.—Lowell (\$50,000).** The grant will continue the efforts of this Lowell-based nonprofit organization - in conjunction with the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project and New England Small Farm Institute – to attain regulatory approval for a Mobile Poultry Processing Unit to meet current and growing demand from small- to mid-scale poultry producers for on-site processing.
- **Massachusetts Fruit Growers’ Association—North Amherst (\$95,000).** The “Massachusetts Orchard Production Upgrade Program” will help ten orchards establish modern, high density “tall spindle” apple orchards.
- **Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture—South Deerfield (\$50,000).** The organization’s “Extend the Season” program will research the demand and interest for winter storage crops among both buyers and growers, and provide business plans to farmers interested in extending their growing season.
- **Southeastern Massachusetts Aquaculture Consortium—Barnstable (\$48,368).** This project will field test seedless oysters on a statewide basis and report findings to DAR. Massachusetts shellfish farmers will be encouraged to undertake a trial use of seedless oysters, which grow faster, have year-round marketability, and are less prone to disease.
- **Massachusetts Woodlands Cooperative—South Deerfield (\$150,000).** Through the “Expanding the Production, Distribution, and Sales of Locally Grown FSC Certified Forest Products” project, the Cooperative intends to extend its acreage and the amount of timber harvested.
- **The Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands—Phillipston (\$25,000).** The “Defining Green Energy for Massachusetts” project will secure a market for responsibly-harvested wood fuel by creating a searchable database of biomass users and preparing educational materials about the value of using biomass.
- **University of Massachusetts –Amherst (\$90,000).** This project will educate Massachusetts growers about how to produce crops safely and consistently in the wake of several fresh produce-associated public health crises across the country.

In addition, DAR approved the following Farm Viability Program grant:

- **Adams Farm Slaughterhouse—Athol (\$250,000).** Funds will be put toward rebuilding a USDA-inspected slaughterhouse in Athol that was destroyed by fire in December of 2006. The rebuilding of the Adams Slaughterhouse will restore critical USDA-licensed slaughter capacity to Massachusetts that will provide Bay State meat producers with in-state meat processing services.

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